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## **MORE THAN 800,000 AMERICANS SUFFER EYE INJURIES AT WORK EVERY YEAR**

### ***Eye Injuries Add Up to More Than \$300 Million Annually in Lost Production Time, Medical Expenses and Worker Compensation***

**CHICAGO (Feb. 27, 2008)** – More workers will injure their eyes today, Wednesday, than any other day of the week, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Every year, there are more than 800,000 eye injuries on the job. And, close to 36,000 of those will require time off from work. Chemical burns are the most common workplace eye injury, followed by cuts, lacerations and punctures.

Fortunately, 90 percent of all eye injuries are preventable simply by wearing the proper eye protection. Prevent Blindness America has designated March as Workplace Eye Health and Safety Awareness Month to encourage workers in all industries to protect their eyes now to ensure healthy vision in the future.

Consider these incidents from those participating in the Prevent Blindness America Wise Owl® Eye Safety Recognition Program, a campaign that encourages and provides recognition to those who follow eye safety standards every day. Vision was saved and eye injuries were avoided thanks to these employees practicing eye safety:

- Patrick in Philadelphia, Pa., was using a hand drill to trim a piece of sheet metal when a piece of fractured metal shot up into his face. Because of his safety glasses, he was not injured.
- Manuel in Corpus Christi, Texas, was disconnecting a main air supply line to an aircraft maintenance platform. The air hose failed to shut off and the hose connector ended up disconnecting unexpectedly, hitting him in the face. Manuel's safety glasses compressed onto his face and left a small cut on the bridge of his nose. However, without the glasses he would have suffered much more extensive injuries.
- In Newcastle, Del., Greg and Mike were inspecting a pump that was used to pump ink to a printing press. The faulty hose burst, spraying ink into both of their faces. Thanks to the safety glasses they were wearing, the ink did not reach their eyes.

"Our vision is something that so many people take for granted until it's damaged," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. "We hope to encourage employers and employees to make sure that eye protection is on the 'to do' list every day."

Most eye injuries occur in production, transportation and service industries. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe work environment. In fact, the group states that eye and face protection must be provided whenever necessary to protect against chemical, environmental, radiological or mechanical irritants and hazards. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that eye injuries total more than \$300 million annually in lost production time, medical expenses and worker compensation.

“Not only does practicing eye safety at work make good business sense, most importantly, it is integral in ensuring the health of employees, which is any company’s most valuable asset,” added Garrett.

Prevent Blindness America recommends the following tips to promote safety in the workplace:

- Safety eyewear must have “ANSI Z87” clearly marked on all glasses or goggles and should be worn at all times whenever eye hazards are present.
- Workers should know where the nearest eye wash station is at their job site and how to use it.
- Employers should be notified immediately if safety hazards are discovered.
- Employees should have regular eye exams to make sure their vision is adequate to do their jobs safely.
- Those who already have reduced vision should ask their employers if prescription glasses or goggles can be provided.

Prevent Blindness America offers several free fact sheets and brochures to safety managers and consumers. Employers may also request information on the Wise Owl safety education program by calling 1-800-331-2020 or by visiting [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

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